U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2004-155-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC-57729 old Lease No. COC-29041

PROJECT NAME: Govt. wells #1, #3, & #5

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 2N., R. 103 W.,
Sec. 15, W½SW¼SE¼
Sec. 22, SE¼NW¼, W½NW¼NE¼, SE¼NE¼NW¼

APPLICANT: Rio Mesa Resources Inc.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional):

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: These wells were originally drilled in 1959. The wells were plugged in 1972. The applicant requests permission to re-enter these wells in the Mancos formation. There will be no new disturbance. The drilling will be by cable tool rig. An access right-of-way will be required from Highway 64 south to the lease line. Access will follow an existing oilfield road and crosses multiple existing linear rights-of-way.

No Action Alternative: No wells would be re-developed.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

NEED FOR THE ACTION: To respond to the applicant's proposed action to exercise their Federal mineral lease rights and develop hydrocarbon reserves.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-5:

Decision Language: "Make federal oil and gas resources available for leasing and development in a manner that provides reasonable protection for other resource values."

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action. During periods of low precipitation, air quality in the area of the proposed action is often diminished by dust caused by human disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. After adequate vegetation is reestablished, blowing dust should return to pre-construction levels.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No increase in dust would occur.

Mitigation: The operator will spread water on the road surfaces to control fugitive dust.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: There are no known cultural resources in the area of the proposed action. The proposed access road is mostly within an inventoried area but, the well pad is not.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Provided there is no new ground disturbance and the new drilling activity and access road route can be limited strictly to the previous disturbance foot print there should be no new impacts to cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to known cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The area is a salt desert shrub association with clayey and salty soils. Throughout this area cheatgrass is present and presents a threat to revegetation efforts. This grass readily invades disturbed soils.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Seeded with the suggested seed mix, the disturbed area is expected to stabilize in two years. The seed mix contains non-native species which were chosen for their adaptability in this harsh environment and the need to compete against cheatgrass. These non-native species have not been shown to move offsite or to

interbreed with species found in the adjacent plant communities. With prompt reclamation and seeding, cheatgrass should be prevented from dominating the project site.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts

Mitigation: Standard seed mix two will be used for reclamation.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: This project is confined to 3 old existing and unreclaimed well pads adjacent to existing well-field access roads. Sparse greasewood and shadscale canopies have recolonized these pads, but understories remain poorly developed and dominated by weedy grasses and forbs. This vegetation association not only fails to provide optimal nesting cover, but the fact that the 3 pads lie immediately adjacent to existing well-field access further limits their utility as nesting habitat for birds typical of these arid salt-desert communities (e.g., vesper and sage sparrow, western meadowlark, sage thrasher).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Minor vegetation scalping and well drilling operations associated with this project would commence in November and is expected to be complete by January. This timeframe is far in advance of the 2005 nesting season and drilling operations would have no potential to interfere materially with nesting activity of migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would affect migratory bird nesting activity.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: Much of the project area is inhabited by white-tailed prairie dogs. Prairie dogs (recently petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act) and their burrow systems are important components of burrowing owl (a State threatened species) habitat, as well as potential habitat for reintroduced populations of black-footed ferret. Under the auspices of a non-essential, experimental population rule, black-footed ferrets have been released annually southwest and northeast of the Rangely Oil Field since 1999. The experimental rule applies to any ferrets that may occupy or eventually be released in northwest Colorado and northeast Utah. Although there are lesser physical barriers and habitats unoccupied by prairie dog between the release sites and the project site, there is potential that ferrets have reached this portion of Coal Oil Basin. Ferrets are wholly reliant on prairie dogs for food and shelter and characteristically select prairie dog mounds with multiple entrances for their more extensive and elaborate burrow systems. Ferret breeding activities begin in early March, with birthing in early May. Young ferrets generally begin to emerge from nest burrows by mid-July.

The proposed pads were surveyed for prairie dogs in July 2004. Fourteen single entrance burrows are located on the larger original working surfaces of the pads. Approximately one-third to one-half of these pads would be reused for proposed drilling operations. Nineteen mounded burrow systems were situated within 50 yards of the pad margins, but there were no mounded systems that would be potentially influenced by clearing or drilling operations.

Burrowing owls are uncommon in this Resource Area. These birds return to occupy a prairie dog burrow system in early April and begin nesting soon after. Young birds are normally fledged by late July with family groups remaining together through September, when the birds leave for southern wintering grounds.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Surface disturbance within occupied prairie dog habitat would be confined to about 0.5 acre and involve fewer than 14 single entrance burrows. It is unlikely that surface clearing and short term use by a truck-mounted drill rig (10-15 days projected) would have substantive influence on prairie dogs inhabiting these pads.

BLM has no records of burrowing owl nests in the immediate project area, and a BLM survey on 7/2/04 revealed no evidence of current year nest activity. Although these wells are scheduled for drilling well before the arrival of breeding owls, there is otherwise virtually no likelihood of owls selecting the few burrows available on the 3 well sites (collectively 14 single-entrance burrow entrances). Pad clearing would involve a total of about 0.5 acre and would have little positive or negative effect on the subsequent availability or suitability of prairie dog burrow habitat during the nesting season.

Similarly, there is no reasonable probability of ferrets inhabiting the few and simple prairie dog burrows available on these well pads. Although unlikely that ferrets would select burrows in close proximity to existing well field access, in the event a ferret were to occupy these pads simultaneous with initial pad preparation activity (scalping of vegetation), there is no reason to expect that the ferret would be killed or fail to successfully escape burrows with damaged entrances. Pad construction and drilling activities would be conducted in November and December of 2004, well outside the sensitive reproductive seasons of ferrets and prairie dogs and effectively eliminating the likelihood of adversely affecting prairie dog or ferret reproductive efforts in surrounding habitat.

This project would have no short or long term influence on prairie dog abundance or distribution by itself or as habitat for black-footed ferret or burrowing owl.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no use authorized that could potentially influence prairie dog, ferret, or burrowing owl populations.

Mitigation: In the event any aspect of this proposed project extends beyond March1, 2005, the BLM Authorized Officer will be notified and additional habitat evaluation will be conducted by the BLM for burrowing owl, white-tailed prairie dog, and black-footed ferret.

Elements of project work in progress at that time would not be subject to modification, but those project elements yet to be initiated may be deferred until after July 15.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: Public Land Health Standards for those special status species associated with white-tailed prairie dogs in Coal Oil Basin, including black-footed ferret and burrowing owl, are currently being met. This project would have no adverse influence on populations, the available extent of suitable habitat, or the reproductive activities of these three species and would, therefore, have no influence on continued meeting of the standard. Small incremental gains in perennial grass cover associated with successful reclamation may be expected to, on a diminutive scale, increase the availability of perennial grass forage for local prairie dogs and potentially benefit those species that rely on them for cover or prey.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes at the site of proposed well. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at this site.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. Commercial preparations of fuels, lubricants, drilling mud utilized for this project would be stored, used, and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws. The generation of hazardous wastes is not anticipated. Details on handling of waste materials are provided in the Application for Permit to Drill.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or solid wastes would be generated under the No Action alternative.

Mitigation: All solid wastes generated from construction, drilling and completion operations will be collected and properly disposed.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is in Stinking Water Creek, which is tributary to the White River, below Rangely Colorado. A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. These wells are in a Category 1, Priority 2, watershed (The Lower White) identified in the Unified Watershed Assessment report. The state has reasons to believe this watershed has water quality problems (sediment and salinity loads) that may impair the watershed

The State has classified this stream segment as Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply and Agriculture. The state has further defined water quality parameters with table values.

These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters. The anti-degradation rule applies to this segment meaning no further water quality degradation is allowable that would interfere with or become harmful to the designated uses.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Impacts to water quality from development of these wells would be similar to other surface disturbing activities. Some of the impacts would be exposure of soil surface to wind and water erosion, reduced water quality due to erosion of sediment and salt, off of the well pads, and piping or rill erosion where the well pad disturbances are exposed to climatic elements. These impacts would be short term until re-vegetation has occurred.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from not allowing the proposed action.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The proposed action will have no effect on the watershed's ability to meet these water quality standards.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: There are no wetland or riparian communities directly or indirectly associated with this action. Thus there would be no environmental consequences and no affect on the Public Land Health Standard for Riparian Systems.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: This project would have no conceivable potential for influencing riparian attributes addressed in the Standards.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is in soil mapping unit #18, Chipeta-Killpack silty clay loams on 3 to 15 percent slopes. This unit is 60 percent Chipeta silty clay loam that has slopes of 3 to 15 percent and 30 percent Killpack silty clay loam that has slopes of 3 to 8 percent. The components of this unit are so intricately intermingled that is was not practical to map them separately at the scale used.

The Chipeta soil is shallow and well drained. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from calcareous gypsiferous shale. Typically, the surface layer is light brownish gray silty clay loam about 3 inches thick. The next layer is silty clay about 6 inches thick. The underlying material is silty clay that has fine shale chips and seams of crystalline gypsum and is about 9 inches thick. Platy shale is at a depth of 18 inches. Depth to shale ranges from 10 to 20 inches. Permeability of the Chipeta soil is slow. Available water capacity is low. Effective rooting depth is 10 to 20 inches. Runoff is rapid, and the hazard of water erosion is high.

The Killpack soil is moderately deep and well drained. It formed in residuum and colluvium derived dominantly from calcareous, gypsiferous shale. Typically, the surface layer is light gray and light brownish gray silty clay loam 4 inches thick. The underlying material is silty clay loam that has some fine shale chips and seams of crystalline gypsum and is 26 inches thick. Platy shale is at a depth of 30 inches. Depth to shale ranges from 20 to 40 inches. Permeability of the Killpack soil is slow. Available water capacity is moderately low. Effective rooting depth is 20 to 40 inches. Runoff is rapid, and the hazard of water erosion is high.

This map unit is in a Clayey-Saltdesert range site.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Short-term impacts would be expected from any surface disturbing activity. Impacts from the proposed action would be loss of the protective vegetation cover, possible increase in salt and sedimentation during storm events, soil compaction from equipment and piping as a result of the Gypsiferous shale. These impacts could continue until successful re-vegetation has occurred. Re-establishing vegetation as soon as allowable would be favorable for controlling erosion problems that may occur.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: In the no-action alternative, neither the surface disturbance nor impacts to soils resources would occur.

Mitigation: If it becomes apparent that salts leaching from soils are becoming a problem on the surface (i.e. large salt deposits begin to appear), the operator will notify BLM. BLM will then coordinate with the operator to implement best management practices to mitigate the problem.

Re-establish vegetation as soon as allowable to control erosion problems.

Because of the gypsiferous shale present in the soils the reserve pit will need to be lined.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The proposed action will have no effect on the soils' ability to meet the land health standard.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located in a Clayey Salt-Desert ecological site. This site is dominated by a salt tolerant shrub community consisting of gardner saltbush, mat saltbush, shadscale with an understory of western wheatgrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail. Cheatgrass is an undesirable, invasive, and alien plant species that is prevalent within the locality of the proposed action. This soil type has a high clay and salt content that is moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting plant production and cover under natural settings.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would redisturb a low seral class of desert shrub community that has naturally revegetated over time. The short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. As this area has a significant component of cheatgrass within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would increase desirable plant species within the rangelands.

Previously this area has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities from a network of well pads, pipeline corridors, and access roads, which have resulted in a fragmentation and reduction of available, productive range sites.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Rehabilitate all disturbed soils using Standard Seed Mix #1 from the White River ROD/RMP.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* The proposed action would redisturb a small segment of the Clayey Salt-Desert ecological site. As the proposed action is within a previously disturbed area, further fragmentation of plant communities would be minimal and would not negatively affect in meeting the Public Land Health Standards for plant communities.

The locality of the proposed action lacks desirable plant species at an appreciable density and frequency level. This is due to the prevalence of cheatgrass within the vegetative understory. A positive benefit in the Health Standards would be received through a successful re-vegetation effort, thus increasing preferred plant species within this low producing rangeland. However this

benefit would be small in nature due to the action being a redisturbance of a rehabilitated landscape.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no aquatic systems potentially influenced by this action. Therefore, there would be no related environmental consequences and no affect on the Public Land Health Standard for Plant and Animal Communities.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): This project would have no conceivable influence on aquatic habitat conditions addressed in the Standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This heavily developed portion of Coal Oil Basin is inhabited year-round by a small resident herd of pronghorn. These animals are acclimated to routine oil and gas production activities. A number of raptors forage opportunistically during the winter in Coal Oil Basin, the most common being rough-legged and red-tailed hawks, and golden eagle. The project area and the surrounding area provide no special or unique habitat features (e.g., nesting substrate) or forage base for these birds.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The project would have no conceivable adverse consequence on big game distribution or habitat utility. The short term and routine levels of disturbance associated with pad construction and well development would be of no consequence to big game or raptor distribution or use within the basin. Subsequent reclamation applied to these pads would offer modest localized gains in perennial herbaceous cover and forage for game and nongame animals.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would influence local wildlife populations, but there would be no opportunity, through reclamation, to improve herbaceous ground cover and composition on these existing pads as cover and/or forage for resident wildlife.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): These 40+ year old well pads were never subject to

reclamation and they are characterized by sparse shrub cover with ground cover dominated by annual weeds. Although these sites in and of themselves cannot be considered meeting the definition of the land health standard, the majority of the shrubland communities comprising this landscape retain sufficient character to support viable populations of resident nongame species. More pertinent, this action would not involve any native rangeland and would have virtually no further influence on the suitability or integrity of habitat for resident wildlife. Subsequent reclamation offers an opportunity to reestablish herbaceous forage and cover conditions (i.e., redevelopment of a perennial bunchgrass component) more consistent with the proper functioning of these arid salt-desert communities as wildlife habitat, thus better opportunity to meet the land health standard on a small scale.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals			X
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

GEOLOGY AND MINERALS

Affected Environment: The wells are located on the western edge of the Rangely Field. Surface geology of the re-entry wells is Mancos Shale and the targeted zone is also Mancos Shale

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Additional oil resources will be recovered from the Rangely Field.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Recovery of the oil resources in the Rangely Field would be less.

Mitigation: None

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed action is in an area where the Mancos Shale and the Sego Sandstones begin to come together. Neither formation is considered a Condition I formation at this time though the possibility of fossils being present cannot be completely ruled out.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Provided that there is no excavation into undisturbed bedrock for the new drilling plan there should be no impacts to scientifically important fossil resources. However, should it become necessary to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation there is a small potential to impact scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within the Artesia Allotment (06308), which is authorized for sheep use during the winter to early spring periods.

The soils within the project area are principally a Silty Clay Loam and the ecological site is a Clayey Salt-Desert. This site is dominated by a salt tolerant shrub community consisting of Gardner saltbush, mat saltbush, and shadscale with an understory of western wheatgrass and bottlebrush squirreltail. Cheatgrass is an undesirable, invasive, and alien plant species that is prevalent within the locality of the proposed action. These brush/grass communities are utilized by sheep for meeting forage requirements, particularly during winter months. This soil type has a high clay and salt content that is moderate to highly erosive and receives low precipitation with rapid runoff, thus limiting forage production.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The individual proposed action would have minimal impacts on the authorized grazing use because the proposed action is within a previously disturbed area which is nominal in regards to the scale of the allotments (49,407 total acres). However, previously this allotment has entailed considerable impacts from oil and gas activities, which have resulted in a reduction and fragmentation of available rangelands and in a loss of forage for grazing use.

The short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by reclaiming the disturbed area with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. As this area has a significant component of cheatgrass within the plant community, successful re-vegetation efforts would increase desirable forage species within the rangelands.

Grazing use by sheep in the Allotment can be authorized from November 28th through April 20th. The proposed action would have some limited impacts during this timeframe while sheep are grazing. This is due to the increased activity associated with the development of the proposed action and temporary decrease in rangelands available for grazing. Impacts to livestock grazing may include such influences as a modification in sheep distribution, reduction in available forage, and impediments to livestock grazing and movement.

Overall, this individual proposed action would have no direct impact on the authorized Animal Unit Months (AUMs) in the allotments. However, the cumulative impacts from past, present, and possible future oil and gas activities may have a long-term effect on the native range's carrying capacity, thus influencing the authorized AUMs. This possible affect would be determined during the grazing permit renewal process.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition. At points where the constructed and/or improved access roads encounter established fence lines on BLM administrated lands, the applicant will install a BLM specified cattleguard.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: Access to the wells will follow an existing oilfield road, a portion of which will be off lease. The access route crosses multiple existing linear rights-of-way.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: A right-of-way must be issued to authorize access from Highway 64 south to the lease line. This has been serialized as COC68079. Use and maintenance of the road must not impact existing uses.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: If the wells are not redeveloped, no access authorization would be necessary.

Mitigation:
1. Colorado One Call procedure shall be activated before any potential disturbance.
2. Contractors must contact existing right-of-way holders to avoid any impacts.

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for

unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and off-highway vehicle use.

The project area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Modern Urban (MU). MU recreation setting is typically characterized by a highly modified environment. MU recreation experience is characterized by a high probability of the sights and sounds of humans present that offers an environment that offers some challenge and risk.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The public will lose approximately 5 acres of dispersed recreation potential while wells are in operation. The public will most likely not recreate in the vicinity of these facilities and will be dispersed elsewhere. If action coincides with hunting seasons (September through November) it will most likely disrupt the experience sought by those recreationists.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No loss of dispersed recreation potential and no impact to hunting recreationists.

Mitigation: None.

VISUAL RESOURCE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is within a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: While the wells are be drilled and a rig is present, the introduction of the rig presents contracting colors and lines thereby drawing the attention of the casual observer. After the drill rig is removed the well will be substantially unnoticeable to the casual viewer. Therefore the objectives of VRM class III would be met.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impact on visual resources.

Mitigation: On all locations use low profile production equipment and paint all above ground facilities Desert Brown (Munsell Soil Color 10YR 6/3).

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Since the proposed wells will be on existing well pads, any potential cumulative impacts associated with this project would be minimal. Cumulative impacts from oil and gas development were analyzed in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) completed in June 1996. Current development, including the proposed action, has not exceeded the foreseeable development analyzed in the PRMP/FEIS.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Robert Fowler	Forester	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Brett Smithers/Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Brett Smithers/Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Marty O'Mara	Petroleum Engineer	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Brett Smithers/Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	ORP	Wilderness
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Soils
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Vegetation
Brett Smithers/Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	ORP	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	NRS	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Jed Carling	Rangeland Specialist	Rangeland Management
Linda L Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	ORP	Recreation
Chris Ham	ORP	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	NRS	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2004-155-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the development of these wells as described in the proposed action, with the mitigation measures listed below. This development, with mitigation, is consistent with the decisions in the White River ROD/RMP, and environmental impacts will be minimal.

MITIGATION MEASURES: 1. In the event any aspect of this proposed project extends beyond March1, 2005, the BLM Authorized Officer will be notified and additional habitat evaluation will be conducted by the BLM for burrowing owl, white-tailed prairie dog, and black-footed ferret. Elements of project work in progress at that time would not be subject to modification, but those project elements yet to be initiated may be deferred until after July 15.

2. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

4. All solid wastes generated from construction, drilling and completion operations will be collected and properly disposed.

5. If it becomes apparent that salts leaching from soils are becoming a problem on the surface (i.e. large salt deposits begin to appear), the operator will notify BLM. BLM will then coordinate with the operator to implement best management practices to mitigate the problem.

6. Re-establish vegetation as soon as allowable to control erosion problems.

7. Because of the gypsiferous shale present in the soils the reserve pit will need to be lined.

8. Rehabilitate all disturbed soils using Standard Seed Mix #1 from the White River ROD/RMP.

9. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage

10. Any livestock control facilities and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition. At points where the constructed and/or improved access roads encounter established fence lines on BLM administrated lands, the applicant will install a BLM specified cattleguard.

11. Colorado One Call procedure shall be activated before any potential disturbance.

12. Contractors must contact existing right-of-way holders to avoid any impacts.

13. On all locations use low profile production equipment and paint all above ground facilities Desert Brown (Munsell Soil Color 10YR 6/3).

NAME OF PREPARER: Vern Rholl

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline P. Hilbourd 9/24/04

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kent E. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 9/24/04

ATTACHMENTS: Location map of the Proposed Action.

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Location of Proposed Action
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